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THE SONNET FORMS OF WYATT AND SURREY.

THE following study is an examination of the form of the sonnets of Wyatt and Surrey, with reference to the Italian standards used by Petrarch, whom they translated and imitated. By the largest definition, the Petrarchan sonnet consists of fourteen five-stressed iambic lines, grouped in two quatrains of two rimes each, and two tercets, forming a sestet, of two or three rimes. In all of Petrarch's sonnets the second quatrain repeats the rimes of the first; and in all but three the arrangement of the second is identical with that of the first; in three hundred and three out of three hundred and seventeen this is the enclosed rime (*abba*). The sestet of three rimes occurs in one hundred and eighty-seven sonnets, that of two in one hundred and thirty; of these only four are concluded with a couplet. In but one does the sestet contain a rime from the quatrains.

The most noticeable difference between

these forms and those used by Wyatt and Surrey is that the latter, however widely they may vary in other details, always close with a couplet, introducing the rime and expressing the thought in such a way as to make the arrangement of the last six lines a quatrain plus a couplet. By the largest definition then, these earliest English sonnets consist of three quatrains of two rimes each followed by a couplet.

With the exception of Wyatt's verses beginning:

"I abide and abide, and better abide,"

written with four stresses to the line, all the sonnets of both poets are written in five-stressed iambic lines.

In the form of the first and second quatrains, Wyatt follows closely the model of Petrarch, employing the enclosed rime in the first quatrain of all but one, in the second quatrain of all but two of his sonnets. With four exceptions the second quatrain repeats the rimes of the first. Surrey departs radically from the Petrarchan standard, adhering, however, without deviation to the rule of identity of structure in the first and second quatrains. With him the alternate rime (*abab*) used by Wyatt but once, is the favorite, occurring in fifteen out of his sixteen sonnets. In only four are the rimes of the first repeated in the second quatrain.

Wyatt shows greater variety in the treatment of the third quatrain, although he uses his favorite enclosed rime in twenty-four out of thirty-two cases. It is to be noted that in the sestets of Petrarch's sonnets there is no arrangement analogous to this. In seven cases the alternate rime is used, manifestly following the arrangement of the first four lines of the sestet found in one hundred and seventeen of Petrarch's sonnets. According to Italian rule also is the introduction of new rimes in these four lines. In twenty-eight of these quatrains both rimes are new; in three but one new rime is introduced; while one repeats the same rimes in the same order as in the quatrains. Surrey, with one exception, retains alternate rime for the third quatrain. There are twelve cases in which both rimes are new, one in which the previous quatrains have furnished a rime, and three in which both rimes have been used earlier.

The concluding quatrain has, as we have seen, practically no parallel in the Petrarchan sonnet; indeed it was considered a defect by most Italian writers and critics. For reasons connected with differences of metrical taste, and particularly with differences in the thought to be expressed, the final couplet was at first the favorite method of concluding the English sonnet. As stated before, all Wyatt's and Surrey's sonnets close in this way; and on no point do the poets agree so fully as in the management of the couplet. Each shows marked preference for a new rime in these two lines. Wyatt uses this thirty times and Surrey fourteen. Each furnishes one example of a couplet in which the rime is borrowed from the third quatrain, and one in which it contains a rime common to all the quatrains. Wyatt has one sonnet so arranged as to close with two couplets, and Surrey one closing with a triplet. It is worthy of observation that the concluding couplet was thus firmly established in the earliest English experiments.

In the arrangement of the rimes, Wyatt's favorite form is *abba abba cddc ee*, occurring seventeen out of thirty-two times. Surrey's is *abab cdcd efef gg*, occurring eleven out of sixteen times. This is at once recognized as the form of the Elizabethan sonnet made classic by Shakespeare. It is to be further noted that in its form it is far nearer to the *strambotti* of Petrarch's contemporaries than to any sonnet of Petrarch's. On the line of this resemblance I hope to make further investigation.

It is inevitable that any English copy of an Italian metre should differ widely from the original in the cadences and in the quality of the rimes, owing to the different values of inflectional syllables in the two languages. Thus we find Italian rimes predominantly feminine, dissyllabic and even trisyllabic, ending in a vowel; and English rimes predominantly masculine, monosyllabic, ending in a consonant. In his attempt to follow foreign usage Wyatt did violence to his native tongue in a fashion that recalls poor Lydgate's and Occleve's frantic attempts to rime like their "maister Chaucer." Some of Wyatt's most pronounced peculiarities are (1) riming words with the same grammatical ending, as *aggrieved . . .*

wearied . . . buried . . . stirred, making, as it were, a grammatical or inflectional rime; (2) riming words that end in the same vowel without regard to preceding consonants, as *jollity* . . . *sluggardy* . . . *unhappy* . . . *commonly*; (3) riming words with different accents as *comfort* . . . *port*; *done* . . . *on* . . . *prison* . . . *occasion*. Marked examples of these forced rimes are found in thirteen out of Wyatt's sonnets, and less noticeable violence in nearly all. None of these errors are committed by Surrey, and here lies one chief reason for the greater melody of his verse.

While Wyatt, like all succeeding English poets, commonly used masculine rime, the very fact of his imitation of Italian models caused him to make frequent experiments with feminine rime, generally unsuccessful, as *variable* . . . *stable*; *ever* . . . *endeavor* . . . *persever* . . . *lever*. Many of the forced rimes referred to above are intentionally feminine. This form of rime occurs in eleven sonnets, and in some of these several times. In this, as in all else, Surrey recognized more clearly than did Wyatt the possibility of the medium with which he was working; and there are but two sonnets in which feminine rime occurs. One of these is a direful attempt to make dissyllables rime throughout the quatrains, and results in the sequence *season* . . . *reason* . . . *peason* . . . *geason* . . . *treason* . . . *poison* (!) capped by the couplet *taken* . . . *shaken*. The other case is used very effectively in the sixth and eighth lines of the fine *Epitaph on Clere*.

The rule of the Petrarchan sonnet is that each metrical division is syntactically distinct, or if not embodying an independent sentence contains a separate clause of a compound sentence. The old statement of the office of the different parts of the poem presupposes this syntactical completeness:

"The business of the first quatrain of the sonnet is to state the proposition of it; of the second quatrain to prove the proposition; of the first tercet to confirm it; and of the second tercet to draw the conclusion."

The point at which this syntactical separation is most essential is, naturally, the point of metrical separation, that is at the close of the quatrains and beginning of the tercets. So carefully did Petrarch observe this rule that

in the first hundred sonnets only the tenth, eleventh, forty-fourth, and seventy-ninth leave the sense incomplete at the end of the eighth line, and in no case is the second quatrain concluded by a real run-on line. In the same hundred sonnets there are twenty-two cases of first quatrains with incomplete sense (Sonnets 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 16, 20, 27, 30, 32, 39, 40, 46, 48, 49, 55, 58, 79, 93, 94, 96); and eleven cases of first tercets concluding with incomplete sense (Sonnets 2, 9, 10, 19, 21, 32, 36, 72, 77, 82, 90). In the eighty-second the overflow from the first to the second tercet is by a run-on line. Wyatt and Surrey did not maintain this logical and syllogistic character of the sonnet, but disregarded the syntactical independence of the quatrains. Thus among Wyatt's sonnets there are seven cases of sentences continued from the first to the second quatrain (Sonnets 7, 10, 13, 13, 15, 22, 23, 26);¹ seven continued from the second to the third quatrain (Sonnets 4, 8, 17, 18, 19, 22, 25); fifteen continued from the quatrain to the couplet (Sonnets 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31). Surrey shows four cases of the first quatrain overflowing to the second (Sonnets 3, p. 12; 5, p. 13; 7, p. 14; 9, p. 16); five overflowing from the second to the third quatrain (Sonnets 6, p. 14; 9, p. 16; 11, p. 59; 13, p. 62; 16, p. 68); and six overflowing from the third quatrain to the couplet (Sonnets 5, p. 13; 6, p. 14; 7, p. 15; 8, p. 15; 12, p. 60; 15, p. 64).

Of the technically termed run-on lines one would expect to find few examples in Wyatt's verses. He was so mechanical a writer, so new to his craft, so unaccustomed to his tools that naturally he took refuge in the end-stop line that furnishes a breathing place before beginning the desperate struggle with five more unwilling feet and a new unyielding rime. It is impossible to be dogmatic on this point, as one's determination of run-on lines often depends on individual phrasing. I have found ten sonnets with none of these lines (Sonnets 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 32); nine with but one (Sonnets 1, 3, 6, 7, 12, 14, 16, 18, 28); six with two (Sonnets 8, 10, 24, 25, 26,

¹ In numbering these sonnets, I have followed the order of the Aldine edition, in which they occur between pages one and twenty-one; but as Surrey's sonnets are not given consecutively in the Aldine edition, I have added to the number of the sonnet the number of the page.

30); four with three (Sonnets 2, 4, 5, 29); one with four (Sonnet 31); and two with five (Sonnets 9 and 19). With Surrey the proportion is somewhat different: four have no run-on lines (Sonnets 3, p. 12; 5, p. 13; 10, p. 16; 14, p. 62); seven have one (Sonnet 1, p. 3; 4, p. 12; 8, p. 15; 9, p. 16; 11, p. 59; 12, p. 59; 15, p. 64); four have two (Sonnets 2, p. 11; 6, p. 14; 7, p. 14; 13, p. 62); and one has three (Sonnet 16, p. 68). It is apparent that the greater smoothness of Surrey's verse can hardly be due to the predominance of these lines.

The typical foot in these, as in all sonnets, is the iambic; but as is customary in English verse this is often superseded by the trochaic foot. Wyatt uses this shifted accent very frequently, in all about one hundred and seventy times; and in about one third of the cases the trochaic foot is the first in the line. Twenty-three of the lines thus introduced begin a new turn of thought (for example, Sonnets 1, l. 5; 2, l. 3; 7, l. 14; 21, l. 5); and the shifted accent may then be considered as a mark of emphasis. But in the remaining cases there is no such change of thought or expression (for example, Sonnets 2, l. 8; 4, l. 8; 9, l. 4; 28, l. 12). Sometimes the initial trochee is followed by one, two, or three others before the measure returns to the iambic; and there are fourteen fully trochaic lines (Sonnet 1, ll. 1, 4, 8, 11, 12; 5, l. 1; 10, l. 4; 12, l. 3; 14, l. 2; 22, ll. 4, 5; 27, l. 1; 30, l. 3; 31, l. 10). Very rarely the shifted accent occurs after a medial pause (Sonnets 4, l. 11; 5, l. 9; 13, l. 9; 19, ll. 6, 12). In general I have been able to see no reason for these trochaic interpolations except the convenience of an unskillful craftsman. Wyatt's other changes of feet are to the dactylic, which he uses twice in the seventh and once in the twelfth line of the nineteenth sonnet; and to the anapestic which he uses about thirty times. The thirtieth sonnet beginning

"I abide and abide, and better abide,"

is written throughout in four-stressed lines of triple measure with occasional dissyllabic feet; and in comparison with the regular five-stressed iambic compositions furnishes a good example of a kind of metrical compensation. Surrey's use of the dactylic and anapestic foot is very sparing. The former occurs once (p. 11, Sonnet 2, l. 1); and the latter seven

times (p. 13, Sonnet 5, ll. 2, 13, 14; p. 14, Sonnet 7, l. 6; p. 59, Sonnet 11, ll. 1, 2; p. 60, Sonnet 12, l. 14). There are two fully trochaic lines (p. 60, Sonnet 12, l. 5; p. 62, Sonnet 14, l. 1).

The initial trochaic foot occurs fifty-six times in fourteen of Surrey's sonnets, and with six exceptions (p. 11, Sonnet 2, l. 10; p. 15, Sonnet 7, l. 10; p. 59, Sonnet 12, l. 3; p. 62, Sonnet 13, ll. 3, 6; p. 69, Sonnet 16, l. 11), it is used after a pause or to mark emphasis. There seem to me few details that show the superiority of Surrey to Wyatt more clearly than this logical, consistent use of the shifted accent.

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THE CALF OF THE LEG.

THIS use of the word *calf* has always been a puzzle. The word is defined in *The Oxford Dictionary* as "The fleshy hinder part of the shank of the leg, formed by the bellies of muscles which move the foot." Evidently related forms are not wanting. In Old Norse we find the weak noun *kálfi* 'calf of the leg,' which appears also in *kálfabót*, defined as 'ham' and said to be equal to *knēsbót*, *knēsfof*. Then there is Irish and Gaelic *calpa* 'calf of the leg,' which has been proposed as the source of the Germanic word. It would, however, be hard to explain how a Celtic *lp* should become *lf* when adopted into a Germanic language, while the converse change of *lf* to *lp* in passing from Germanic into Celtic is not strange. Moreover, the word lacks explanation in Celtic and can be easily explained as Germanic; hence we must, as in so many other cases, regard the Celtic as the borrower. In fact, we find, not only *calf of the leg* appearing in Gaelic as *calpa*, *calbtha*, Manx *colbey-ny-coshey*, but also *calf* 'vitulus' appearing as *calpack*, *colpack*, *colbthach*, Manx *colbagh*.

The English word, which appears as *calf* in the fourteenth century, may stand for OE. *cealf*; but, if the form *calfe* is not merely an orthographic variant, the word was originally a weak derivative, cognate with ON. *cálfi* or derived directly from it, and the shorter form is due to the influence of *calf* 'vitulus.' But this is immaterial.